Focus on the programme ‘Action Against Gender-Based Violence Affecting Refugee and Migrant Women and Children in Greece, Italy, Serbia and Bulgaria.’

October 2019 – December 2020

Refugee and Migrant Situation Analysis

In 2020, UNHCR observed 24,250 refugee and migrant arrivals in Serbia, around 17% of whom were children. While the Government estimates the number of new arrivals to be significantly higher. There has been a steady increase in the number of new arrivals in Serbia since summer 2019, intensifying further after the lockdown ended in the second part of 2020. Serbia is a transit country for refugees and migrants, who mostly reside in government reception centres. By April 2020, the number of refugees and migrants housed in reception centres was 9,105, an increase of 200% compared to the previous summer. Of these 416 were women and 216 girls. The increase in migrant flows, coupled with fear of COVID-19 pandemic, has been accompanied by an increase in anti-migrant sentiments and attempts to harass migrants and refugees. When entering the country, women and children on the move are physically exhausted, psychologically traumatized and many need medical and protection support.

UNICEF Priorities and GBV Strategy

In Serbia, the GBV response has been mainstreamed into UNICEF’s overall programme, promoting refugee and migrant survivors’ physical and psychosocial healing and recovery, protecting them from further violence, and also focusing on system level reforms for longer term solutions. UNICEF prioritized establishing safe spaces, where women and girls can safely and confidentially access information and services and other important sources of support. For a sustainable impact, UNICEF works with key public institutions, Belgrade University and civil society, and provides financial and technical support, including supporting state agencies to improve their safeguarding policies and procedures, including in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse and integrating GBV and child protection into the broader EU migration management initiatives. As co-chair of the National Child Protection Working Sub-Group, UNICEF supports the coordination of Child Protection activities, where GBV response is also integrated.

GBV Programme Updates and Achievements

Between October 2019 and December 2020, UNICEF and partners worked to ensure GBV survivors and those at risk were able to access care and support in Serbia. 2,582 survivors were provided with GBV prevention and response services, including psychosocial support, counselling, case management and referral for specialized support. During this period, UNICEF and partners

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

(Oct 2019 – Dec 2020)

2,582 people in need accessed GBV prevention and response services

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TARGET June 2021</th>
<th>REACHED Dec 2020</th>
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<td>2500</td>
<td>2582</td>
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92% of polled beneficiaries would recommend UNICEF-supported services to others

Beneficiary Feedback

- Did the service provider help you to adjust to remote service delivery? 73%
- Did the staff express themselves clearly? 98%
- Did the staff treat you in an open minded and non-judgemental way? 100%
- Did you feel that the staff respected your privacy and that they were trustworthy? 96%

5 GBV service delivery points supported by UNICEF

Percentage of services that meet GBV minimum standards

- Outreach activities or mobile response are sensitised on GBV issues 100%
- Translators available and trained on GBV for clients who speak other languages 60%
- Staff/volunteers are trained to interview/work with child survivors 50%
- Trained staff/volunteers can provide care for GBV survivors at the appropriate level 50%

7,874 women, girls, men and boys accessing information on GBV
adapted their approach to respond to the declaration of a national state of emergency following the outbreak of COVID-19. This included introducing remote psychosocial and case management services via phone, Viber and WhatsApp groups to disseminate information about how to access this GBV support, and gender-specific information on COVID-19. In-person outreach was still offered in the central Belgrade area, including short-stay shelter services. UNICEF partners also stepped in to provide hygiene support, distributing dignity kits to women and girls to help them move safely, promoting their health and protection. UNICEF also supported its partner Info Park to organize coordination meetings for all field actors involved in the emergency response in Belgrade to strengthen cooperation between state institutions and civil society organizations, responding to the needs of at-risk groups during the pandemic.

Throughout 2020, UNICEF and partners facilitated multiple trainings and information-sharing activities. For example, in collaboration with the University of Belgrade, UNICEF supported the development of a dedicated GBV and CP in Emergencies course, accessible to both students and practitioners.

UNICEF also supported the development of a training module for the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) on Safeguarding and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). This accompanied technical support for SCRM, including a comprehensive revision of internal policies and the development of the new ones that introduce safeguarding measures with a specific focus on PSEA. UNICEF also provided technical supervision sessions for partner staff on topics such as data sharing policies, stress management, assertive communication and burn-out prevention. UNICEF partner ADRA delivered a webinar on the global platform Child Hub to present their research, Room for women and girls: Female voices from refugees and migrants in Serbia.

In Focus: Programme adaptations and response to COVID-19

As UNICEF and partners worked to adapt their programmes, including transitioning quickly to remote service delivery, a number of challenges emerged. For example, many refugee and migrant women and girls in Serbia do not have access to phones; reception centres do not always have stable internet connection; and information about the availability of remote support is typically disseminated in written form, which can exclude illiterate women and girls.

To address these challenges, UNICEF and partners provided training to staff to support the transition to remote service provision. Info Park organised training on running a GBV helpline and ADRA provided guidance on delivering psychosocial support over the phone. Info Park and ADRA also worked with long-term clients and community leaders to help them advertise their remote services to reach women and girls in need, including those without access to phones. In order to communicate with illiterate women and girls, Info Park and ADRA shared information about services in audio as well as written forms. Two weeks into the lockdown in Serbia, ADRA established two online groups (one in Arabic and one in Persian) to share information on COVID-19 and mental health. Info Park set up Viber communities where they also shared COVID-19 information and directly responded to questions on GBV and COVID-19 they had received via their GBV helpline.

Alongside the shift to remote service provision, partners in Serbia continued to provide in-person outreach services where possible. Throughout the pandemic Info Park continued its in-person outreach activities with refugees and migrants on the move in Belgrade, including new arrivals, and in the camps in the south of Serbia. Info Park and ADRA also distributed dignity kits in the reception centres, which included hygiene products, information on COVID-19 and GBV (including what happens if a survivor discloses an incident), and contact information for further support through the GBV hotline. With these adaptations, UNICEF and partners were able to continue providing support across Serbia even when in-person services were limited and physical spaces closed during lockdowns.

Endnotes

1 Phase III of the programme is October 2019 - June 2021, therefore this factsheet does not cover the entirety of Phase III of the programme.
3 The Commissariat for Refugees and Migration Republic of Serbia (SCRM) publicly presented data on the estimated number of new arrivals in Serbia in 2020.
5 Supra note 2.
6 This analysis was provided by UNICEF Serbia and is taken from consecutive UNHCR Serbia monthly updates for the period August 2019 to March 2020.
7 According to the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration Republic of Serbia (SCRM).
8 Supra note 2.
10 The name of the unaccompanied refugee girl has been changed for protection.